

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

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No. 34.

Price, Five Cents.



"WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?" ROARED THE VOICE OF JESSE JAMES, AS HE DASHED AROUND A TURN IN THE ROAD AND PULLED UP HIS HORSE.—(CHAPTER CLXXII.)

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Jesse James' Exploits.

By W. B. LAWSON.

CHAPTER CLXXII.

ALMOST A HANGING.

"String 'em up, pards! The whelps deserve it! They'd 'ev stole the horses ef we hedn't nabbed 'em!"

"Yer wastin' time, Buck Bolton! Yank ther thieves up an' be done with it!"

"Fetch another rope an' string ther three on 'em up tergether—ther limb'll stand it, Jim!"

"The narve of the rascals tryin' to rob the James gang! It's the richest joke I've heerd since we struck Nevada!"

The last speaker, an outlaw by the name of Coyote Jim.

"Try thet thar noose, Buck Bolton," he said, "an' see ef 'tain't tied ter suit yer!"

He stepped back as he spoke and swung a rope which dangled from the limb of a tree so that his companion could catch it.

Buck Bolton, one of the blackest scoundrels in the notorious James gang, examined the knot in the end of the rope critically.

"Ther noose is all right, Jake. Hope your'n will

be as tight," he chuckled. "Now, then, Bink, bring on the fust victim an' see ef it fits! I reckon the one in ther lather britches 'll be the one t' jerk up fust!"

Bink Barrows, the outlaw addressed, lowered a businesslike-looking weapon that he had been holding against a human breast, and, taking one of the suspected horse thieves by the shoulder he pushed him forward.

In less than a second, Coyote Jim slipped the noose over his head, and the first of the three victims stood ready for his punishment.

"Ha! fits like a collar! Keep it taut, Buck, while I fetch ther tother!" remarked the fellow, jovially; then he turned to the second suspect, whose hands had been tied together. "Cut him loose, Jim! Reckon th' feller ain't a coward, ef he is a thief!" said Buck, with a trace of justice cropping out.

The second man was pushed under the second rope and the noose fitted around his neck, then Coyote Jim cut the heavy twine that had bound his wrists together.

Then Jim turned to the bearded victim.

"He's ther only one of ther trio thet's let out'er

peep sence we corralled 'em," he said. "How is it, Whiskers? Got anythin' t' say fer yerself 'fore ye go up yonder!"

The others chuckled, but there was nothing said, and the half-dozen hillside ruffians bent their gaze upon the old fellow addressed.

There was something about him that had excited their interest from the first.

They were accustomed to meeting queer characters on their jaunts through the mountains, but this fellow was a type unknown to any section.

He looked like a centenarian with the agility of a schoolboy.

His beard was snow white, but his eyes were as bright as a ferret's.

Who he was he had refused to say, and the outlaw gang were determined to make him talk.

They had ways of their own of wringing confessions from those who chanced to fall into their hands, particularly if they were unfortunate enough to arouse suspicions.

As they glared at the present suspect, they looked like so many vicious wolves.

He had risen and was standing almost erect with his knees trembling and his hands clasped convulsively.

The two men with nooses around their necks held their breath as they watched him.

What he said would perhaps influence their fate a little.

He was their only hope at this critical moment, and the old fellow knew it as well as themselves.

It was this that made him slow in answering Coyote Jim's brutal question.

"I reckon I hev got somethin' ter say, strangers," he began, in a shaky voice. "Yer've been so swift I ain't got my wits t'gether! If ye'll jist wait a while——"

The remark was addressed to Jim, but the old fellow's glance moved to the other outlaws, and immediately six heads were shaken decidedly.

"We ketched yer in ther corral, stranger! Thet

don't admit of no argument," said Buck Bolton, gruffly. "What was yer doin' thar ef 'twarn't tryin' ter steal ther hosses?"

"I'll admit ye ketched us thar, Buck Bolton, but I'll ask ye one question: What did we want of ther hosses, when th' critters we was ridin' was wuth more'n th' hull bunch of your'n put t'gether?"

"Thet's a good question, Buck. I reckon we'd orter answer it afore we string th' feller up!" spoke up another outlaw, gravely. "I ain't fer killin' a man just because we ketched him a lookin' over a lot o' sprained hossflesh."

He moved forward as he spoke, and the three victims saw a man of giant stature, but a face with just a trace of humanity in it. Instantly the old fellow with the long, gray beard held out his hand.

"Put it thar, Bob Fields! I reckon yer a squar' an' fa'r man, ef ye be an outlaw!" he said, promptly. "I 'low I ain't afraid of ther noose no more'n ther rest of ye, but when a man ain't guilty, it's a black trick ter cut off his wind. I 'low I've done enuff t' desERVE hangin', but yer offen ther track t' take me fer a hoss-thief!"

"Then what was yer doin' in th' corral, stranger?" asked Bob Fields, curiously. "I'll promise yer a hearin'. I'm leader of this hyar gang in ther cap'n's absence! Is that thar right, pards, or is I mistaken?"

He faced the gang of outlaws as he spoke, and his hand fell involuntarily to the butt of his pistol.

"I 'low ye be, Bob, tho' hanged ef I know how yer did it!" remarked Buck Bolton, sourly. "Th' cap'n was cussin' yer up hill and down only last week, an' now yer in ther gang ag'in an' Jess is as sweet as honey! Yer er snake in ther grass, Bob Fields, but 'tain't fer me t' go ag'in yer, 'less yer give ther order t' free these hyar red-handed rascals, when I 'low right hyar I'll see yer in blazes fust! Be yer with me, pards, or be yer goin' ter let Bob scare yer out yer level senses!"

"Bob kin go t' blazes! I reckon I'm as quick at th' trigger as he is," remarked Coyote Jim, putting his finger on the hammer of his weapon. "I 'low

Bob's goin' too far! He's gittin' a swelled head sence the cap'n took him back into th' gang! Reckon he needs a lesson, pards."

"String ther cusses up fust! No use crowdin' ther mourners!" suggested Bink Barrows.

"I reckon now that thar's easier said than done——" began Bob Fields, with an ugly look in his eyes.

"Curse you! yer too high-handed! A bullet will larn you your place, I reckon! Drop that thar pop, Bob Fields, or by ther howlin' hyenas, I'll let daylight through you!"

Coyote Jim had drawn his weapon and cocked it as he spoke, and, as the muzzle spit fire, a bullet from Bob Fields' weapon answered it.

Both men dropped to the ground with a lump of lead in their legs, and, at that second, a magnificent thoroughbred bearing Jesse James, the famous outlaw, on its back, thundered around a turn in the road and drew up before them.

"Hello! What's the trouble here?" roared the outlaw, as he glanced from one to the other.

Buck Bolton straightened himself up and answered the question:

"We ketched these three fellows in ther corral last night, Jess, an', bein' you hedn't come, we reckoned we'd amuse ourselves a little! We'd 'ev had 'em strung up ef Bob hedn't interfered! I reckon Jim did right ter put a bullet inter him!"

"And I say he was a fool!" thundered the bandit king, angrily. "I've been looking at their horses, and they're all sound animals, while ours ain't worth their feed, and all of you know it! Bob was right to stop you until I came! I reckon, tho', Jim's got his pay! Now, then, drop those ropes, boys! I want a look at your prisoners!"

He slid from the saddle as he spoke and moved toward the two men with nooses around their necks.

Buck Bolton bent over Coyote Jim, and put his pocket flask to his lips, while a fellow by the name of "Dead-Shot Bill" performed the same office for Bob Fields.

This left only two men unemployed, and their eyes were upon their leader, who was treating his prisoners in an extraordinary manner.

Grasping one of them by the shoulder, he jerked off a false beard and mustache, revealing the face of a young man behind the gray hirsute appendages.

A growl of surprise broke from the outlaw's lips, and, at that stage of the proceedings, another strange thing happened.

The old fellow, who looked to be seventy, if a day, suddenly leaped into the saddle that Jesse James had just vacated, and, putting spurs to the horse, made a dash for liberty.

At the same moment the strong arm of the victim flew up and landed a stinging blow under the bandit king's ear.

Crack!

Crack!

Two revolvers spoke, but the bullets flew wide of their mark, and the daring rider glanced back over his shoulder and laughed tauntingly.

"It will be my turn next, Jesse James! I've got your horse! Next time, it will be you! As you treat my comrades, so will you be treated!"

Jesse James was picking himself up, and his men had grabbed the two men and were holding them.

Crack! went another weapon, but Fleetwind, the famous thoroughbred, was out of sight, and Jesse James stood shaking his fist after the vanished rider.

"A thousand curses upon his head! I know him now!" roared the bandit chief, furiously. "Bind them hand and foot, boys, and let me have them! They're my worst enemies, curse them! They're Pinkerton detectives!"

CHAPTER CLXXIII.

A FIGHT FOR FRESH HORSES.

"What'll you do with them, Jess?"

The question was asked by Frank James, the bandit's brother, who appeared on the scene ten minutes later.

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The outlaw glanced around, and his brow darkened like a thundercloud.

They were hiding in a hollow between the hills, fifty miles or more from any human habitation, and there was nothing in sight but a couple of rough log cabins, a row of tumble-down stables and the zigzag fence of a corral which held a half-a-dozen winded horses.

"We've got t' be gittin' on, Jess," broke in Buck Bolton, as the outlaw hesitated. "We're due at Snake City this time ter-morrer, by right. Bob, hyar, 'lows thet thar job won't keep a minute later."

"That's right, Jess," spoke up Fields, who was bending over the wound in his leg, trying to find the bullet with his jackknife.

"Then I'll finish with these whelps, and we'll go on," said the outlaw, promptly, "tho' I don't see how I'm to get there without Fleetwind."

He glanced at his prisoners as he spoke, and found them both watching him intently, with a look in their eyes that made him stare a little.

"Reckon you've made a mistake for once, Jess," said the younger of the two, coolly. "Why don't you go through our pockets?"

"I'll go through you, and with a bullet, curse you!" roared the outlaw; "you'll pay dearly for that blow, you whelp! I'd shoot you down like a dog if——"

"If you dared, Jesse James!" finished the young man, promptly. "You're a robber and a murderer, but you don't quite dare to kill me, you cur! Ha! ha! You know bad luck would befall you, if you harmed a hair of my head!"

He looked Jess steadily in the eye as he spoke, and the outlaw stared a minute.

"Keep a bead on 'em, Frank, while I do as he says," said Jesse James, as he started an inspection.

Putting his hand in the fellow's coat pocket, he drew out a letter. In a second the outlaw's bronzed cheeks paled, and his eyes were blazing.

"How'd you come by this? Answer, you cur, and tell the truth, too, curse you! A lie on your lips and

you'll die! How did you come with a letter from my wife in your pocket?"

Thrusting the muzzle of his weapon almost under the young man's nose, the outlaw waited for his answer.

"Read the letter and you'll see!" said the other, calmly. "I reckon you'll be glad I ain't dead when you read what she says!"

Jesse James gave his brother a quick look, which made Frank lower his weapon; then the outlaw king broke the seal of the letter.

A look of amazement crept over his face as he read, and when he had finished he stared at the bearer incredulously.

"Now I reckon you know what I was doing in yonder corral last night, Jess," the young man said, amiably. "I was looking for Fleetwind in order to trace his master. I thought it was safer to wake the animals than a gang of road agents in this lonesome spot, but I found I couldn't wake one without the other!"

"Ha! I reckon not! This hyar gang allus sleeps with one eye open," blurted Coyote Jim. "An' ef Fleetwind hed been in ther corral, we'd er nabbed ye that much sooner!"

"Shut your mouth, Jim! I'm 'tending to this deal!" ordered Jesse James, shortly. "Now, sir, what's your name?"

He glanced back at the letter, but the young man promptly supplied it.

"I am Howard Lent, a native of Denver, traveling alone to 'Frisco," he said, cheerfully. "Got kicked out of the Lone Trail stage two days ago, and ran across this fellow here by accident. Lucky for me he had an extra horse so——"

"What's his name?" asked the outlaw, without waiting for him to finish.

Howard Lent turned to his companion, who was a man of thirty-five, dressed in the typical garb of a Nevada miner.

"Reckon yer wouldn't believe who I was ef I was ter tell," said the fellow, promptly. "I was sheriff

of Washoe County once, but I 'low I'm ashamed ter own it! Reckon ye'll think more on me, Jess, when I tell yer I'm back in ther ranks! I'm on my way ter join Bill Price an' his gang som'ers nigh Luba City!"

Jesse James gave him a keen look, and then re-read his letter, after which he put it in his pocket, and turned to his brother.

"Mother is sick," he said, briefly; "we'll have to make tracks for Sacramento."

Frank James shook his head. There seemed no way of making the journey.

The only good horses on hand were the three owned by the newcomers, and they would hardly last out such a wearisome journey.

"Reckon yer takin' too much stock in ther feller, Jess," muttered Coyote Jim, sullenly. "What does an honest man want of er set of false whiskers?"

"That's my business, you fool!" spoke up the young man, promptly. "Just keep quiet, will you, while I talk with your master!"

The men glanced at each other, but Jesse James flushed with pride. He was always gratified when any one, friend or enemy, acknowledged his superiority.

"It's got to be done, Frank," he went on, with decision; "we'll overhaul a stage further down the gorge, I reckon! If not, there's pasture lands to the west, where we may find horses!"

"She said you was to come at once, Jess," said the young man, earnestly. "It seems the people in Sacramento have found out who she is, and they're making it hot for Jesse James' wife and mother!"

The outlaw growled an oath, and his brow grew darker than ever. In spite of his vicious nature, he loved these two women, and would have murdered in cold blood any one who offended them.

"I'll go if I have to hoof it! Curse the people of Sacramento!" he swore. "Get a move on, men! The deal at Snake City can wait!"

The famous outlaw had forgotten everything now except that his mother needed him.

Buck Bolton saw this, and endeavored to bring him back to his surroundings.

"I 'low yer air swallerin' these hyar yarns too easy, Jess," he said, grimly. "Whar'd he fall in with ther old codger? Ask him thet, cap'in!"

Jesse James saw the wisdom of the remark, and was his cruel self again instantly.

"Where'd you overhaul the sleuth, young man?" he asked, brusquely. "You know the old saying about keeping bad company!"

The two suspects looked at each other, and then both burst out laughing.

"He may be a sleuth, and he may not, Jess," began the young man; "anyhow, the joke is on me, so I'd better tell the story! The ex-sheriff here and I were plodding over the hills last night, when we saw the fellow, and held him up! You see the robbers that looted the stage had cleaned me out, and Sam here, had nothing in his pockets but buttons. We yelled at him to halt, but the fellow laughed at us! Cussed if he had a thing about him that was worth stealing! When we found that out we let him come along with us, and now, darned if he ain't outdone us both by stealing the thoroughbred!"

The crestfallen air that accompanied the words was so well assumed that Jesse James drew a breath of relief. He was beginning to believe that the fellow was not lying, but that did not mean for a minute that he meant to relax his vigilance.

"Reckon we'll take 'em along and see what they do! 'Twon't be safe to let 'em go now, and I don't want to kill 'em!" he said, in a low tone to Frank.

The outlaw's brother nodded his head in acquiescence. Frank James was not for killing any one if they could be robbed without it.

"Hark, Jess! Thar's some one comin'!" warned Dead Shot Bill, as he crouched and put his ear to the ground. "Reckon it's a drove cuttin' ercross the hills."

Jesse James waited to hear no more, but was up on the corral fence with a pocket field glass to his eyes.

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"There's a herd coming," he called down. "Reckon they're from that ranch we passed night before last. There ain't a horse among them except what the punchers are riding."

"They'll do, Jess!" said Frank James, grimly.

Pulling a watch from his pocket, the outlaw timed the arrival of the herd, which could not reach them for some time owing to the rough country. Then he descended from his position, and demanded some supper.

"Let the two chaps loose! They are my guests for the present!" he ordered, promptly.

The men put up their weapons, and Howard Lent stretched his limbs and yawned with great satisfaction. He had been in the saddle for two days, and now that he was in no immediate danger of being hung, he was pretty nearly happy.

While the men were cooking the supper in one of the cabins, Lent dropped on the ground beside Jesse James and began talking pleasantly.

He had given his name correctly, but he knew that Jesse was suspicious of his errand in that vicinity. The letter from Mrs. James was genuine, all right, but Lent had not told how he came in possession of it, and for some reason or other Jesse James did not press the question.

The truth was Lent had picked up the letter in the stage the night he was robbed.

It had been dropped by the man who shot the driver and battered open the express box on that lively occasion. Being a Pinkerton man on the trail of the famous outlaw, Lent put the letter to good use.

It had lengthened his life already, and he looked for it to do still more. He meant by its help to capture the robber.

Sam Green, the ex-sheriff of Washoe, ambled over to the corral and stood looking through the fence, with the eagle eye of Frank James watching his every movement.

An hour later, the herd of cattle was near enough for them to get ready for business.

The creatures came over the hills like an army, kicking up the dirt and lowing musically.

The drove was headed for a level plain about an eighth of a mile away; but to get there the outlaws were obliged to pass over a bit of rough country.

Mounting the best horse, Jesse James took the lead, the men following on the other beasts, with lariats hanging on the horns of their saddles.

Lent and the ex-sheriff were sandwiched in between the outlaw brothers, and, in spite of the bandit king's hospitality, neither was allowed a weapon.

Jesse James had read his wife's letter over again, seemed quite inclined to credit Lent's story, but it was noticed that he refrained from asking many questions.

This peculiar fact alone made Lent uneasy.

He could not force his story on the outlaw without appearing overanxious. As for the ex-sheriff, the outlaws all took him at his word, and, as he was really what he claimed, his position was fairly safe.

It remained to be seen how he would treat Jesse James' courtesy.

Leaving a fringe of trees which had protected them thus far, Jesse James led his men across the clearing to a mass of boulders, which would afford them excellent shelter.

In doing this, he timed himself so that his party would not be seen, and by peering between the jagged rocks, he could watch the oncoming cattle.

They swept by in droves, ploughing up the bushes as they went, and raising such a dust that for a time the punchers were invisible.

Then the sharp-eyed bandit caught a glimpse of the party, who seemed to be on the alert for something in the shape of danger.

"There's a girl among them!" muttered Jesse under his breath. "Look, Frank! She's as pretty as a picture! Eloping, I reckon! The big fellow on the sorrel is keeping his eye on her!"

"Warn the men to be careful, Jess! The girl mustn't be hurt," was the quick answer.

"I kin see seven, not countin' the girl! Reckon

there'd orter be more'n thet thar, Jess!" whispered Buck Bolton.

"We need seven of the horses! That leaves one for the girl," said Jesse James, without turning. "We're in for a lively scrimmage! Rope the animals Lent, as we unseat their riders!"

The herd swept by, with the dust clouds growing thicker and thicker; then the first rider galloped ahead, yelling at a refractory steer, and the balance of the cowboys were abreast of them.

"Snakes! They've got good horses! Pity I hadn't dropped the leader!" growled Jesse James, under his breath. "Look out for the girl! Lasso her horse if you can, but don't harm a hair of her head!" he added, sternly.

The next second the outlaw's pistol gleamed through a cut between the rocks, and one of the cow-punchers fell with a bullet in his shoulder.

"Halt!" roared Jesse James, in a voice of thunder. "Throw up your hands if you would save your lives!"

There was just a second of silence, as the punchers drew in their horses; then the young girl's voice rang out like a trumpet:

"It's Jesse James! I'm sure of it, boys! Shoot him down like a dog!"

CHAPTER CLXXIV.

A HOT FIGHT.

The young girl rose in her saddle, as she spoke, and pointed a businesslike-looking pistol at the mass of boulders.

With a word of warning, the punchers hemmed her in, one big fellow leaning over and pressing her down gently in the saddle.

"Curse them! They mean to fight!" growled Jesse James, as he saw the maneuver. "The rascals are armed to the teeth! We must show 'em no mercy!"

"I 'low there's more on 'em than we see, cap'n," began Buck Bolton.

Jesse James made no reply, but glared steadily at the cowboys.

"They ain't located us yet! Wait!" warned Frank James, as he moved his horse farther into shelter.

"Surrender your horses!" roared Jesse James, throwing his voice so that it would be hard for them to place it exactly.

"We'll surrender nuthin'! If yer want the horses come an' take 'em!" was the answer.

"You don't know me! I usually get what I start for!" roared the outlaw, as he made a sudden dash from behind the rocks.

"Whoop! At 'em, boys!" the outlaw yelled, pointing two pistols at the group and discharging both together.

The cattle stampeded in all directions, but there was a prompt reply from the bunch of cowboys, the first rider coming back at a gallop to take a hand in the scrimmage.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Shots were exchanged so rapidly that there was no time to think.

"Lasso 'em as we drop their riders!" ordered the outlaw, as he faced Howard Lent for a second.

Lent and Green exchanged glances, and then both dashed forward and swung a lariat in the air over the heads of two riderless horses.

At that second another horse dashed from behind a clump of trees, and a succession of rapid shots took the outlaws by surprise.

"It's Fleetwood, Jess! There's that sleuth on her back! No wonder they knew us!" called Frank James, sharply.

Lent was having a struggle with the horse that he had lassoed, but he could see that Jesse James had turned into a demon.

The air was full of smoke and dust, and the horses were cavorting like mad creatures.

The antics of the horses were all that saved their riders.

They were never in the same place longer than a fraction of a second, so it was impossible to shoot with any great degree of accuracy.

Lent jerked his catch to the ground by a tremendous effort, but before he was alongside Jesse James had slid from his own horse and was in the saddle of Lent's horse. This act saved the outlaw's life, for his own horse dropped the next second, and a bullet sped over its back, killing the horse behind it.

The skirmish was a wild one, but it only lasted a minute, for as Fleetwood dashed through the smoke, with the handsome young stranger on her back, the cowboys crowded on her heels in a charge as reckless as it was valiant.

Crack!

Crack!

Bullets sung in the air like hail, and three of the outlaws had fallen. Jesse James was beginning to see that the odds were in favor of the cowboys.

"At 'em, men!" he shouted. "One more charge at the rascals! I'll give ten thousand dollars to the man who will kill the whelp on Fleetwood's back! My curses on the man who injures the thoroughbred!"

"Ha! ha! Jesse James! So you know me, do you? Take that, you scoundrel!" was the answer, as the handsome young rider dropped the trigger of his weapon.

Jesse James slid from the saddle, but was back in a second.

He had allowed the bullet to cut the air where he had been sitting.

"Curse the whelp! That was once he fooled me!" he muttered. "The fellow is improving in his disguises!"

Frank James had placed himself between his brother and the cowboys, and was blazing away, when a crack over the head from an empty weapon sent him reeling from the saddle.

"Shoot him, boys! Don't let Jesse James escape!" cried the young fellow, again. "There's ten

thousand dollars reward for the man who kills him! My weapons are empty! Don't let him escape you!"

A rush followed, but Jesse James had emptied his weapons also, and there was no time to reload. He drove the spurs into his horse, and made a dash for cover, but swung around in the saddle so that he could face his enemies while retreating.

Frank James had been picked up by Buck Bolton, who was also retreating, and the shots were dying out in another minute.

"Bolt for it, cap'n! I've got a bullet for the man that follows!" yelled Dead Shot Bill, who was behind a clump of bushes.

Jesse James needed no urging, for he saw that the battle was against him, and, as he made a wild dash for the rocks, Dead Shot settled the daring cowboy who was trying to get a bead on Jesse before he reached cover.

"Halt! Hold on, boys! The victory is ours!" called Fleetwood's rider. "Take time to reload or you'll be caught napping! Jess is after his horse! He'll be back in a minute!"

The cowboys drew back, and Lent and Sam Green joined them.

Then Will Star, the famous Pinkerton detective, loaded a couple of revolvers, and passed them to his friends without a word being exchanged between them.

"We've winged three of the cusses," began one of the cowboys. "I reckon we kin finish ther rest as quick as they show their noses."

He glanced down at the three wounded outlaws as he spoke, and saw one of his own companions lying dead beside them.

"They'll suffer for that, curse them! Reckon they can't leave the rocks without our seein' 'em yonder!" he growled between his teeth. "Come out, you blood-thirsty snakes, an' we'll settle this hyar business!"

Two of the punchers were injured and one was dead, which would have made the two sides even had it not been for the two detectives and the ex-sheriff.

Will Star shook his fist at the rocks behind which Jesse James was hiding.

"All he wanted was horses until he saw me," he said, bitterly. "Now, he'll make crow's meat of us, boys! Be ready for the devil! He'll charge in a minute!"

"God help him if he harms Belle. If——"

The sentence of the cow-puncher was not finished, for, with a yell, the outlaws rallied.

They were greeted by a volley from the reinforced punchers, while Fleetwood's rider was still in the lead, brandishing his weapons.

"Tricked!" growled Jesse James, as he saw Howard Lent's weapon aimed straight at his head, and realized that the young man had joined forces with his enemies.

"Ha! ha! We fooled yer, Jess! Take that, yer sinner!" roared Sam Green at that minute, and a second bullet sped by the outlaw.

"Bolt for it, Jess! We're outnumbered!" cried Frank James, and once more the faithful brother swung his horse between Jess and the group of punchers.

Jesse James needed no urging, but made another dash for cover, with bullets whistling past his ears, and even grazing his shoulders. The second attack was even shorter than the first, and in less than two minutes the fighting was over.

Both sides had emptied their weapons, and the results spoke for themselves.

There was one dead on each side, and four badly injured.

The outlaws had only succeeded in stealing two horses.

Through it all the young girl kept her nerve, and managed to control her mount.

She had shown a degree of spirit unusual in a woman.

"We've whipped 'em, boys," said Will Star, who was having some difficulty to hold the thoroughbred in. "Jess didn't dare take a shot at me for fear of killing his pet. I reckon he won't tackle us again till he gets reinforcements."

"Then I'll turn sawbones, and see if I can save any lives," said Lent, as he dropped to the ground and began inspecting the wounded.

Belle Barton joined him instantly, and began tearing her skirt into bandages.

"Reckon we may 's well camp out fer a while! Ther critters kin go on by themselves; they know the way," said Bat Lynn, the girl's lover. "Ther boys must be saved if ther thing is possible! Turn to, boys, and build a fire back yonder by the boulders!"

"Jess may be there, Bat! I ain't seen ther cuss sence he bolted!" was the answer.

"Then flush him, constarn ye! What's ther matter, Bill Higgins?"

Bat took a stride toward the boulders, and instantly his sweetheart called after him:

"He'll kill you, Bat! Oh, please don't go there!"

"Pshaw! What's ter hinder him pepperin' us between ther rocks? I reckon we'd best chase ther cuss out an' make an end of him!" was the answer.

"I'm with you, Bat! Come on!" cried Star. "We'll all feel easier to have the thing over!"

There was a dash around the rocks, and the cowboys who had been ministering to the wounded raised their heads to listen.

Belle Barton put down the flask that she was holding to a dying man's lips, and sprang back into her saddle, with the grim determination in her eye to follow her lover.

At that second a loud shout from Star sounded from behind the boulders. Jesse James was not in sight, and neither were his men, and, as there was a clearing all around the rocks, their disappearance took on a mysterious aspect.

Lent tracked the hoofprints to the extreme edge of the boulders, but there was nothing to prove that they had proceeded any further.

"They're somewhere in that pile!" he said, decidedly. "The question is, where, and how are we to get at them?"

There was no answer to his query, and every face

bore a puzzled expression. Five minutes were spent in conjecture, and half-an-hour in examining the rocks, but it resulted in nothing but deeper mystery.

Jesse James, with his brother and Buck Bolton, had vanished completely somewhere in a pile of rocks a hundred feet long, that looked as solid as the rock of Gibraltar.

After that Star and Green patrolled the rocks, while Lynn superintended the burying of the two dead men and seeing that the injured were made as comfortable as possible.

The cowboys were attended to first, and then the outlaws, the victors showing the latter a degree of consideration that made them both feel and look sheepish. Bat Lynn was for going on after the herds as soon as the men were able, but Star was like a terrier who had cornered a rat—he did not wish to leave the spot until he had flushed his quarry.

"We've got three priscners and all ther horses, an' we've chased Jess ter cover! What more do we want?" asked Bat, a little sullenly.

"I reckon Bat's in a hurry ter git ter Snake City," chuckled one of the men. "I 'low ther weddin' cake is spilin', ain't thet so, Bat?"

Bat colored and glanced tenderly at Belle Barton, and the brave young girl responded promptly.

"I reckon 'tis, Bert. Ther parson's ter be thar this time ter-morrer, an' 'twon't look respectable ef ther bride is missin'!"

She smiled mischievously as she spoke, and the men laughed uproariously; then one of the chaps that she had just revived pulled off his slouch hat and laid it on the ground in front of him.

"We'll all be there, bless yer eyes!" he said, gaily, as he dropped a good-sized nugget into the hat. "An' thar's yer fust weddin' present, Miss Belle. I 'low ther rest'll foller suit, bein' as how they all think yer about right!"

"Thar's my hand on thet thar statement," said another of the punchers, as he tossed a gold coin into the hat. The others crowded around, and dropped

their offerings, and, as the last turned away, Coyote Jim hobbled over to the sombrero.

In an instant a couple of weapons were leveled at his head, but the outlaw only dropped in the biggest nugget in the collection.

"Oh, no! I won't have it! Take it out!" cried Miss Barton, promptly. "How do I know but what he stole the nugget! I'll take no wedding gift from an outlaw if I know it!"

Her eyes flashed as she spoke, and Bat Lynn promptly applauded her. "Thet thar's ther talk! Take it back, stranger! I reckon yer mean all right, but I 'low we don't want it! This hyar pop'll be yer offerin' ter ther Bat Lynn family! Haw! Haw! It's er sooveneer of our fust meetin', stranger! I'll hang it over ther fireplace in ther best room an' look at it every day when you air rusticatin' in prison!"

A yell from Star interrupted the cowboy's eloquence, and in a second every eye was turned toward the clump of boulders.

"I've found 'em! Look here, boys! The rocks are hollow!" cried the detective. "Hanged if they haven't gone inside and closed the hole behind 'em! Ha! ha! It's the end of Jesse James! The fellow was mad to hide in that rat trap."

CHAPTER CLXXV.

A LIVELY CHASE.

Leaving Bill Higgins to watch over the injured, Bat Lynn and the balance of his companions hastily remounted. As they joined Star at the further end of the pile of rocks, he pointed to a jagged boulder that seemed to be wedged into a natural opening. It was on the rear of the pile, where they could not see it during the scrimmage, but the outlaws had made good time in moving the stone and replacing it.

Lent dropped from his horse, and began examining the jagged edges of the rock, and at last he made a startling discovery.

The end of a wooden bar projected at a certain

point, and by throwing his weight upon it the stone moved easily.

There was a gasp of surprise, as the strange door swung open, revealing the entrance to a narrow cave, blocked by three dead horses.

"Snakes an' crocodiles! I've heerd of ther Rattlesnake Cave, but I 'low this hyar's ther fust time I ever located it!" was Bat Lynn's comment; then he laid a warning hand on the detective's shoulder.

"Thar ain't no use wastin' time hyar, pardner! Thet thar cave goes clean thro ter ther ravine yonder. It's ther old counterfeitin' headquarters. Them thar as goes in it ain't likely ter ever come out."

This bit of information had its weight with the detectives, and the stone was allowed to close of its own accord.

As it swung slowly back to place, a hoarse laugh echoed from somewhere in the darkness beyond the dead horses.

"It's him! It's Jess! Curse ther feller's impudence!" snapped Bat, viciously.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! We've got you where we want you at last, Jesse James!" called out Will Star, tauntingly.

There was a flash in the darkness, and a bullet struck the rocks an inch above the speaker's head.

Then Jesse James roared out a curse that was shut off by the rock slipping softly into place. It had closed as easily as though it was swung on hinges.

Five minutes later there was a scattering of forces, for even Bat Lynn had become inspired with the hope of winning the government's ten thousand dollars.

Every man that could ride was in the saddle, galloping toward Snake City, Star and Howard Lent being the only exceptions.

The two detectives took turns in guarding the three injured outlaws and one cowboy who remained, and also relieved each other in the watch set upon the cave opening.

They anticipated a long vigil, but were agreeably

disappointed, for two hours from the start their comrades returned, bringing four good horses, two able-bodied punchers and a light cart with them.

Star opened the stone door again, and, keeping out of range, called out to the outlaws.

There was no reply, and even a bullet failed to arouse them.

"Lasso ther horses an' jerk 'em out!" ordered Bat.

The thing was done, but there was still no sound of the outlaws; then Star hit on a plan that was worthy of Jesse James himself.

He forced Coyote Jim to enter the cave at the point of a pistol.

The fellow was gone ten minutes, and returned almost breathless.

He reported no trace of the bandit king, and the men believed him.

Bat Lynn placed his sweetheart in charge of Bill Higgins, and a parting scene followed that made the detectives envy him.

Then the girl and the wounded men were placed in the cart, and Bill and the two cowboys started back to Snake City.

The others held a conference, which ended in their remaining.

They vowed that Jesse James should not make his exit through the entrance he went in at.

"I reckon thet thar fixes ther scamp," remarked Bat Lynn, as he surveyed their work an hour or so later.

"Thet thar stun weighs a ton ef it does a pound," chuckled Sam Green. "Ef thet wont do, pards, we'll roll up another!"

"You hate Jess as bad as we do, I reckon," said Lent, curiously. "I didn't know I'd found an ally when I run across you, pardner!"

"I 'low I don't love the rascal," said the ex-sheriff, honestly. "Thar's al-fired leetle in this hyar section wuth stealin', anyhow, an' what show hev I got, I'd like ter know, when er cuss like Jess has stole er march on me?"

This candid avowal did not affect the ex-sheriff's

standing, and, as the party followed the supposed course of the cave underground to the ravine, he was able to give them all some valuable information.

"They call thet thar Rattlesnake Cave 'cause thet pest can't live in it! Reckon thet air is awful from what I've heerd! 'Twan't so in thet counterfeiter's days, fer then I 'low thet scamps kept thet fires er burnin'. Thar was flashes now an' then above thet rocks! 'Fore I knowed what 'twas I used ter reckon 'twas hell! Queer I never reckomembered thet place till Bat hyar named it!"

"I'd clean forgot it, too! Reckon now thet ain't no spot hyarabouts thet Jess don't know," said Bat, soberly. "Now, ef we kin find thet 'tother openin'—"

"Whoop! Hold on, boys! Thar 'tis, I reckon!" yelled Sam Green, suddenly. "Leastways, thet's thet cusses we're er lookin' fer, pards. They jest crept from thet bresh an' air runnin' like hellyuns!"

He pointed toward the ravine, some fifty feet down the slope, and the men got a swift glimpse of three figures darting through the bushes.

There was a mad dash forward by the party of four, but by the time they reached the fringe of wood where they had seen the skulkers Jesse James had once more succeeded in evading them.

Bat drew in his horse on the edge of the sparse grove and looked around.

As he did so a pistol cracked, and his horse reared and fell, with a bullet in its brain.

Bat was on his feet instantly, yelling like an Indian, and dancing around so as to disconcert the marksmen.

"Whoop! Look out, boys! The cuss is in the trees!" he yelled, lustily.

Lent looked up quick and caught a glimpse of a dark object hugging the trunk of a thickly-leaved, spreading maple.

Crack!

The dark object changed its position suddenly, and at the same minute the trees seemed to be raining bullets. The cowboys drew back to a place of

safety just in time to let the leaden hail tear up the earth where their beasts were standing.

"Curse them! They can't come down! Thet's one good thing!" chuckled Sam Green, as he twisted his neck for another glimpse of the dark object against the tree trunk.

The sun was setting, and the light was treacherous, so he contented himself with cocking his pistol and waiting for a better opportunity to return the outlaw's fire.

Lent dropped from his horse so as to be less conspicuous, and tethering it near by crept cautiously through the bushes.

A minute later he had spied Buck Bolton, and was circling around the tree trying to get a shot at the fellow, who shifted his position with the agility of a tree toad.

"Where the devil is Frank?" whispered Star in Bat Lynn's ear. "Green has spotted Jess, and Lent has got Bolton treed! There's a trick in the game somewhere! Keep an eye to windward, old fellow! I've tethered the ranger's horse back yonder in the bushes!"

As he spoke Sam Green discharged his weapon, and a taunting laugh followed.

"By thunder! That's Frank! I thought it was Jess!" blurted out Star.

"So did I! I'll fetch him down this hyar time, an' be sure of it!" cried Green, as he fired again.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Frank James from his perch among the branches. "So you're a sheriff are you! Well, I reckon the rascals in your section don't fear you! You'd best go back to Washoe and practice with a bean shooter!"

Green let out a snarl of rage, and blazed away again, and just at that second Lent drew a bead on Buck Bolton.

The two reports startled the horse in the bushes, and as Bolton let go his hold on the limb and pitched headforemost the detective turned to quiet the frightened animal.

He was in time to receive a stunning blow in the

face, and hear Jesse James himself let out a roar of coarse laughter.

The next second the outlaw was in Fleetwood's saddle, and dashing through the bushes like a cyclone, with Will Star at his heels and bullets singing around him. On and on they went, the bandit king not turning his head to see who was his pursuer, but making his mount fly over the ground at a pace almost incredible. Star dug his spurs in deeper and ground his teeth, but he had emptied his weapon and could not reload it, as it took all his skill to stay in the saddle at the rate they were going.

The race was a hot one, but the outlaw gained slowly, and ten miles from Snake City Star lost him completely.

He reined in his horse just in time to save himself a fall, for the creature staggered the next minute and fell dead in his tracks. There was nothing for the detective to do but go on on foot, with the expectation of being shot at from ambush any minute. At daylight he was pounding on the door of the only inn at Snake City.

The inn was a dilapidated old shanty, but compared favorably with the rest of the place, which was really a settlement of disgusted prospectors, who hadn't seen gold for so long that they hardly remembered what it looked like.

There was lead enough in the hills for them to eke out an existence, but what they made during the day went for rum at night, so the settlement was not in a flourishing condition.

Nick Boozer, the proprietor of the inn, came to the door with a shotgun in one hand and a boot in the other.

When he found that Star was harmless he dropped both and made a bunglesome attempt to cook some salt pork and potatoes for the unexpected patron.

An hour after his arrival Higgins and Miss Barton appeared at the inn, and the three managed to get rid of their host while they talked over the situation.

"Reckon Jess' has headed for Sacramento," Higgins was just saying, when there was a clatter of hoofs in the street, and Nick clumped into the room in search of his pistol.

Star rushed to the door, with Higgins and Miss Barton behind him.

It was a cloudy morning, and a light rain was falling.

"Thar he is! Stop thief!" bawled Nick behind them.

A man on horseback was galloping down the street, with a tin cash box under his arm, and a handful of sleepy, half-drunken men after him.

"It's Jess!" muttered Star, under his breath. "They'll never catch him!"

"They must! He has robbed them!" cried Miss Barton.

Then she dashed out into the street and cried out shrilly:

"Stop him! Stop him! Thief! Thief!"

This cry aroused the men, and a dash to secure horses was made by some of them.

Star took up her cry, and let out a shout that turned the street into a pandemonium.

Jerking the empty pistol from his belt, he rushed after the robber.

"Whoop! After him, men! It's Jesse James, the outlaw! Ten thousand dollars reward for him, dead or living!"

This news seemed to paralyze the natives, but Jesse James promptly rose in the saddle and looked back over his shoulder.

He had recognized the detective's voice, and was drawing a bead on him.

"Ha! Ha! Set 'em on, curse you! Come on, the whole pack of you, and feel my bullets! There's the first one for you, Will Star! You've had your time, you whelp!"

A bullet whizzed past Star's ear, and the outlaw vanished around a bend, with the men of Snake City making a feeble attempt to follow him.

Star came back to his friends, with a gloomy look upon his face.

He had not dreamed that the outlaw would be at his evil work so early.

"He's looted the bank, I reckon," said the inn-keeper in some consternation. "I 'low he's got a couple er thousand, an' two-thirds of it is my property."

Just then there was another commotion in the street, and Higgins exclaimed:

"Snakes and crocodiles! It's Bat!" he howled, as he saw a group of newcomers.

Miss Barton gave a shriek of delight, which made Star envy the cowboy, and then they all hurried to the street, where quite a crowd had assembled.

"I ketched er flyin' glimpse of ther rascal," Bat Lynn was saying, when he spied his sweetheart.

The natives stared over what followed, but Lent managed to draw their attention from the lovers.

"We've got one of the gang, this fellow, Buck Bolton," he said, pointing to the only weaponless member of the party. "We treed Frank James, but it got too dark to hit him, besides we were afraid this fellow would die before we could jail him. There's five thousand reward offered by the express company, if I remember correctly!"

"Yer right thar, strange," said one of the sleepiest natives. "I'm ther Wells, Fargo representative in Snake City, I reckon. Lock ther robber up, Jim Jelly, an' I'll notify ther officials!"

The constable of Snake City rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, and suddenly assumed great dignity, Lent following him to the jail and giving all necessary information. The rest of the crew had been incarcerated by Higgins, and, as Lent saw them behind the bars, he could not help a feeling of satisfaction.

"We'll have Jess there yet; I swear it!" he muttered under his breath.

The next second he caught the constable's beady eyes fixed upon him, curiously.

"I'll watch you, old fellow," he thought, as he walked away. "Blessed if I don't believe you're in league with the bandit!"

CHAPTER CLXXVI.

THE PROOF OF TREACHERY.

Jesse James had really looted the bank, which was only a frame building, with easily accessible windows.

He left a dead watchman behind him, but that was all.

There was not a sixpence left in the institution's coffers.

"He'll make straight for Sacramento now, I reckon," chuckled Howard Lent, "for the scamp is anxious to get to his mother as soon as possible."

"Then we'd best be moving that way," said Star, promptly. "We'll get fresh horses here, and stock up with provisions."

"Reckon yer'd best let ther mayor at Sacramento know who ter expect," suggested the Wells, Fargo representative. "Jess'll steal ther hull bloomin' town afore you kin git thar t' stop him."

"Thet thar's easier said than done, Bob Slicer," spoke up Jim Jelly, gruffly. "Who's t' take th' ten-mile journey over th' hills t' th' telegraph I'd like t' know? I reckon these hyar chaps are doin' right t' go ahead after th' rascal."

Star agreed with the constable, and kept him talking for a minute, which gave Lent an opportunity to study the fellow.

"He's dead anxious to get rid of us," thought the clever detective. "Got something up his sleeve, probably. I'll keep an eye on the fellow."

After that he made a bluff at securing horses from the natives for their long ride, and Jim Jelly was active in talking up the ability of each animal as it was presented for inspection.

This aroused his suspicions even more and made him eager for a quiet talk with his companions.

Half of the residents of Snake City and two-thirds of the horses were in the street before the inn, and watching his chance, he moved close to Bill Higgins.

He was in time to see the cowboy slip a bit of

paper into Jim Jelly's hand, and the two exchanged a glance that was full of forebodings.

Lent changed his mind and crossed over to where Star was standing, beside one of the horses.

Watching his chance, he whispered something in his friend's ear, and a moment later Star engaged Jelly in conversation over the price of a broncho that was the property of the constable. Lent passed them a second later, and jarred the official's shoulder.

At the same minute he slipped his hand into Jelly's coat pocket, and deftly extracted the paper.

It was a nervy thing to do, but the natives were highly excited, Jelly himself being so deeply in the dicker that he was dead to trifles.

Lent bolted into the inn a minute later, and ordered some breakfast, finding Bat Lynn and Miss Barton sitting at one of the tables.

Opening the paper cautiously in the palm of his hand, the detective read as follows:

"Eleven to -night. See that the men are mounted."

The scrawl was signed exactly as he surmised.

It bore the dreaded name of "Jesse James."

"That settles it! There's a deal on for to-night, and we must stay to see it," he muttered under his breath.

Then he fell to pondering how to outwit the outlaw.

It was evident that Jesse James had some good reason for making a second visit to Snake City.

The others came in after that, and devoted themselves to eating, while the landlord of the inn bundled some canned goods into a bag and fastened it securely over one of the saddles.

Lent watched Bill Higgins closely, but could find no fault with the fellow. He seemed as anxious to get after Jesse as any of the party, but there was not a trace of over-anxiety in his deliberate movements.

Bat Lynn was forced to part with his sweetheart again, but not until he had secured an escort to conduct her to the railroad.

They had decided to defer the nuptials until they reached Sacramento City. Lent was sorry for the girl, but there was nothing to be said or done. Since learning of Bill's treachery, he was growing suspicious of every one.

CHAPTER CLXXVII.

THE FIGHT IN THE FOREST.

An hour later the detectives were once more in the saddle, well armed and provisioned for their long ride across the mountains.

Sam Green was missing when the call came to start.

It was a disappointment all around, but not one surprising.

Lent had expected the ex-sheriff to tire of the chase as soon as he felt sure that the way was clear for him to begin plundering.

Bat took the lead, and Higgins attempted to bring up the rear, but by a clever ruse Lent dropped behind him.

"Hanged if the traitor is going to get a bead on me if I know it," he muttered; then, as Star glanced back over his shoulder, he gave him a signal.

"Faster, old man! Take advantage of good roads while we have them!" said Star, promptly, and Bat touched up his horse into a lively gallop. The low housetops vanished rapidly and Snake City was left behind.

Before them stretched a short plain, dotted with trees and overgrown with chaparral, while a fringe of thicker woods in the distance showed the slope of the foothills.

Only a few miles ahead lay the California border, but the detectives knew well that they were not destined to reach it.

Somewhere in the shadows of the hills they meant to surround Bill Higgins and either wring a confession of his treachery from him or fill him with bullets.

This would give them ample time to rest the balance of the day, and return to Snake City at night and see what Jesse James was up to. They had

just sighted the proper spot for their experiment, when a hideous yell came from the bushes. The next second an old man stumbled into the road, with a monstrous bloodhound clinging to his garments.

Bat Lynn raised his pistol and fired in a second, and as the dog rolled over in the dirt, he called out, laughingly:

"Great snakes! Reckon now I'd as soon die a nat'ral death as be skeered t' death, stranger! What ther devil ailed th' beast? I 'low he must a been alfred hungry t' set his teeth in sech a tough old carcass!"

They had all stopped while he was talking, and as the old fellow wiped the mud from his clothes they could hear his teeth chatter.

"He's skeered cl'ar thro'! Be ye goin' east or west, stranger?" asked Bill Higgins, coolly.

"I war travelin' west, stranger," began the old fellow, feebly, "an' I ain't seen er bite sence ther day afore yesterday."

Higgins dropped from the saddle before the others could express an opinion, and a minute later the old man was in his place.

"I'll walk aways, that is ef ther rest is ag'in doublin' up," said Higgins, with a quick glance at Star.

The detective scowled, and was about to answer, when they all heard the sound of horse's hoofs behind them.

"By Jove! It's Sam Green! Hanged if the rascal ain't stole a horse!" yelled Lent, excitedly.

A scowl passed over Bill Higgins' face, and Star, who was watching him intently, saw a glance pass between the treacherous cowboy and the old fellow he was befriending.

In an instant the shrewd sleuth had his thinking cap on, and as Green came up he let Lent do all the talking.

His play was to use eyes and ears in the present emergency.

"Hello, Green! So that's your game. You quit our company to steal a horse. I congratulate you, sheriff. You've stole a good one," said Lent.

Green appeared to be crestfallen, but he was inwardly chuckling.

"Reckon now ther bast 'll come in handy," he muttered, as he took a sharp look at the old fellow. "Yer kin hev ther loan of him, Higgins, bein' as how we're pardners in this hyar deal! I 'low ye thought I'd give up ther chase arter thet scoundrel."

"We reckoned yer hed, pardner," said Higgins, grimly, as he accepted the mount.

"Who be ye arter, pardners, if ye'll 'low ther question?" asked the old man, suddenly. "I reckon I'm keepin' ye back."

The words were spoken so dolefully that Star pricked up his ears a little.

It did not seem possible they could be put on, and there was nothing about the old chap that looked artificial.

"If that face is disguised it's well done," he thought, as he scanned the wrinkled visage. "However, I've worn a few disguises myself, so there'll be no harm in keeping an eye on the old duffer!"

The party moved on again, with the two detectives doing some deep thinking. The presence of Green and the old man had complicated matters, and it was necessary to hold a conference before anything could be attempted. Star reined in his horse, and made a motion to ride close to Lent, but he was prevented by the old man putting his horse between them. Then Lent braced up a little, and moved nearer to Green, but Bill Higgins "crossed his bow" just in time to make him pull up and let Green's animal get a full length ahead of him. Lent bit his lips, and he and Star exchanged glances, while Higgins, who was watching them, scowled deeper than ever.

"Things begin to look serious," thought Star; "something must be done to change the atmosphere a little. Hanged if I ride a mile further without solving that riddle!"

His eyes wandered to the old man at that instant, and then he started a little.

The old chap had suddenly straightened up, and put his hand behind him.

"Hold on there, stranger!" called the detective, promptly. "If there's anything in your hip pocket just keep it there, will you! This is not the time to be flashing firearms! It makes people feel a little suspicious!"

"I 'low yer right, pardner!" said the old fellow, withdrawing his hand. "I was jest a seein' ef ther pop was there. Thar ain't nuthin' in it, as yer might er guessed by my not shootin' th' dog. I 'low ye've got er few forty-two's erbout ye, ain't ye? Ef ye'd obleege me with half er dozen I'd——"

"You'd plug me with holes, I reckon!" broke in Star, getting desperate. "Well, I'm not so obliging as all that, my friend. Take a look at that hip pocket, Bill! I want to see what's in it!"

Higgins turned like a flash, and fairly glared at the detective, but as Bat had a seven-shooter leveled at his head, he did not seem in a hurry to answer.

"Snakes! This hyar's rideckulous, pardners!" began the old man.

Lent snapped the trigger of a derringer, and the fellow stopped suddenly.

"Go through his pockets, ye knave, or I'll let daylight thro' ye!" roared the ex-sheriff at that second, and the detectives drew a breath of relief to know that Green was with them in the adventure.

"I 'low ye'd better do it! Reckon they won't take ther pop away from me," said the old man to Higgins. "I'd rather hev stayed with ther dog! This hyars er gang er cutthroats—no mistake erbout it!"

"I reckon thet's what, too," muttered Higgins, who was at his wits' end. Then he leaned from his saddle, and lifted the old man's coat tails, disclosing to the detectives' astonished eyes a solitary pistol, without so much as one chamber loaded. This sight was so unexpected that Star and Lent again exchanged glances, and Lent even began to blame himself for being so suspicious. Star was a more seasoned detective, with little or no sensitiveness on such subjects, so his only feeling was one of relief.

"Now, while you are about it, you can hand me your own weapons, Bill Higgins!" he said, sternly, as he took the empty pistol. "You're a traitor, and a cur, and we've had enough of your company! Throw up your hands, and don't let out so much as a whimper! Keep a bead on him, Green, while I go through his pockets!"

Higgins was taken by surprise, and for a second he was speechless; then, as Star relieved him of two good pistols, he made the air blue with curses.

"I fancy we'd better end his career right here; it's as good a place as any," remarked Lent, glancing around with a quick look. "You two watch the others while I attend to the fellow."

Star kept his weapon on the cowboy until Lent dismounted from his horse, and, taking Higgins by the collar, jerked him over to a sapling. Green was covering the old man, who sat like a statue in the saddle, without showing the faintest interest in what was happening.

"Now, you wretch, have you anything to say?" asked Lent, as he finished tying Higgins to the trunk of the sapling.

"What's the charge ag'in me?" asked Higgins, sullenly.

"You are accused of complicity with Jim Jelly and Jesse James," replied Lent, coolly. "There's a deal on to let out our jail birds to-night. You and Jelly were to help Jess to another haul in Snake City."

"Who says so?"

The old man asked the question like a parrot, as he straightened himself in the saddle.

Star gave the trigger of his weapon a warning click, but the old chap was too indifferent to even glance over his shoulder.

"I saw him give Jelly this paper," went on Lent, drawing a scrap from his pocket. "I got it from Jelly afterward. Do you want more proof, stranger?"

"How did you get it from Jelly?" asked the old man again, this time with a ring in his voice.

The detective laughed, but did not answer.

"Enough of this! Drop the traitor, Lent," ordered Star, uneasily. "When we are done with him we'll answer the old fool's questions."

The detective turned his eyes toward his friend as he spoke, and Bat and Green forgot their charge also and followed his example.

It was a fatal act, as they found to their sorrow.

There was a quick motion of the bent body, and the old man faced his captors; then two pistols spit their contents through the holes in his ragged garments.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Sam Green was the first victim, and dropped with a yell, while Star's weapon was knocked from his hand just as his horse fell under him. Lent acted promptly, but his first bullet went wide of the mark, and the next instant a leaden missile whizzed past his ear and buried itself in the breast of his victim. Then there was a roar of laughter, and the clatter of hoofs, and the old fellow rose and stood erect in the saddle.

Crack!

Crack!

Lent felt a pain in his arm, and fell to the ground, with his ears still filled with satanic laughter.

"Tricked again, by thunder! And by Jesse James himself!" he groaned.

Bat Lynn said nothing, but ground his teeth from pain.

Ten minutes later he was hurrying back to Snake City in search of a doctor, as his wound demanded immediate attention.

CHAPTER CLXXVIII.

JIM JELLY.

As Jesse James urged his horse forward, he shook with brutal laughter.

This little scene was the sort that he gloried in.

It increased the awe which his enemies felt for him, and added fresh glory to his list of evil doings.

The wretch thought he had ridded himself of three enemies at a bunch, but this was not so.

In reality, he had only succeeded in killing his friend, Bill Higgins. The detectives and Sam Green were only slightly wounded.

He had taken the precaution to look over his shoulder until his victims were out of sight, but the fact that none of them so much as moved was given too much significance. He did not understand the spirit of grim determination possessed by the detectives, and their comrades.

After an hour of hard riding the outlaw arrived at the very heart of the dense grove, and, dismounting from his horse, he hid the faithful creature in the bushes.

Then he dropped under a tree and put his back against the trunk.

A moment later he was chuckling with laughter.

"Ha! Ha! There's more'n one way to pull a trigger! Reckon, now, those whelps didn't so much as guess I had 'em!" he muttered, as he drew two magnificent weapons from his garments.

From the trigger of each hung a long twine string, which showed how the clever outlaw had discharged the weapons.

It also explained why his aim was not as accurate as usual.

An hour passed, and there was a sound in the bushes, which caused the outlaw to clap his hand on one of his pistols.

"It's me, Jess! Glad I've found ye so easy!" said Jim Jelly's voice, and the constable from Snake City came through the trees, leading his horse by the bridle.

"Ha! Ha! Right on time!" chuckled Jesse James, with seeming good nature, while he fixed his cruel eyes on the face of the rascal.

"They've gone, ther hull bunch on 'em, Jess! They're provisioned fer ther tramp t' Sacramento," went on the fellow. "I reckon I've cleared ther way fer yer in fine shape, pard."

"Which way'd you come, Jim?" asked Jesse James.

The constable pointed in a direction that was seldom traversed.

He had not come over the regular route, so had not run across the detectives.

"Slicer'll be drunk by 'leven, sure, Jess," went on Jim Jelly, "an' thar's five thousand in ther express box waitin' fer ther Snake Trail stage. Ther box is hid whar th' devil can't find it, but I reckon thet thar kin be got over. Dan Wilcox kin find it, once he gits his nose outer ther jail. Now, I 'low you'll give me ther five hundred, won't ye, pardner?"

There was an eager gleam in the fellow's eyes, which the outlaw noted, but, believing that Jelly had deceived him by giving up the paper, this show of greed only made the outlaw angrier.

Springing to his feet like a cat, he astounded the jailor by pulling a bead on his heart.

"You're a liar and a traitor, Jim Jelly!" he roared. "Confess, you cur! You've betrayed Frank and me to those whelps, the detectives!"

"Hold on, Jess! Not so fast!" called a voice at that minute, and Frank James, mounted on a forlorn beast, came crashing through the bushes.

"'Fore God Almighty, Jess, I ain't done no such thing!" began Jelly, anxiously. "Higgins give me ther paper, and I've got it hyar!"

He thrust his hand into his pocket as he spoke, and a blank look came over his face.

Then he turned first one pocket inside out and then the other.

"Ha! ha! ha! Reckon, now, I was right, Jim," chuckled the outlaw, grimly. "I saw the paper an hour ago in the hands of one of them sleuthhounds, and how was he to get it, I'd like to know, if you didn't give it to him!"

Jelly shook his head, and began an emphatic denial, but one look at the outlaw's set face showed him that he had little to hope for. Frank James slid from his saddle and walked up to his brother.

"Hold on, Jess! We can't afford to lose any of our men just now," he said. "The people of Snake City are scouring the hills for you! You didn't

kill the whelps! They tricked you, the whole lot of them!"

A furious curse broke from the outlaw's lips, and he made a movement toward his horse instantly.

"There's no use chasing 'em, Jess! They're back at the inn," went on Frank, coolly. "Higgins is dead! You shot him. I was on my way there when I got the news, and five minutes later I saw the sleuthhounds. You barely scratched 'em, Jess!"

There was another curse, and then Jesse James muttered:

"I'll have that five thousand, by thunder! Nothing shall stop me! I'll give you a chance to prove your loyalty, Jim Jelly, but remember, you cur, my eyes are upon you! Waver so much as a hair's breadth in your friendship for Jesse James and I swear you shall taste the outlaw's bullets!"

"I'm yer friend, Jess. I allus was!" muttered Jelly, who was glad to get off with his life. "An' we'll get ther stuff, Jess, if th' plan works all right! Once git th' boys on horses an' ther rest is easy! Thet thar'll make ten in th' bunch, an' who's t' stop us in Snake City? Ther hull push couldn't stand up ag'inst us!"

"I ain't so sure of that, Jim Jelly, and I warn you to be careful, Jess!" said Frank James, grimly. "There'll be no liquor sold in the settlement to-day. The sleuths will attend to that, and you know what that means. There'll be no drunken men in Snake City this evening."

"Drunk or sober, this is my only night in this section!" thundered Jesse James. "To-morrow I start for Sacramento, and I won't go a step without that five thousand!"

"I expect that letter's a fraud, Jess," began Frank, as Jesse drew the missive from his wife from his pocket and glanced at it.

"No, it ain't. It's genuine, all right! Cussed if I know how the rascal got it!" was the outlaw's answer.

"Reckon we'd better be movin', Jess! I 'low I hear th' bloodhounds!" spoke up Jim Jelly, as he raised one finger, warningly.

Jesse James untied his horse, and paused with one hand on the bridle.

"They're coming, Jess! A dozen strong! They've got Bob Slicer's dogs, too!" said Frank, in a quick whisper.

At the very same instant Jesse James caught a glimpse of a bloodhound on a distant hill.

CHAPTER CLXXIX.

PURSUED BY BLOODHOUNDS.

"Quick! On to the river!" he ordered, with a curse. "It's only a short dash over the knoll yonder! Once in the water we can defy the dogs, and as for the human curs—they must take their chances."

He sprang into the saddle as he spoke, and then made an imperious gesture.

"Lead the way, Jim Jelly! I want you in front of me!" he ordered. "Keep in the shelter of the trees as far as possible! When you gain the clearing, ride like the devil! The whelps are bound to see us before we gain the brow of the hill yonder, but with the start we've got, it will be easy to out-run them!"

A mad dash followed, Jim Jelly leading the way glumly, and, as the three robbers reached the clearing, Frank James looked back over his shoulder.

Already the first of the ferocious pack could be seen among the trees.

The whole eight would be upon their heels in another minute. A hideous howl from the red-eyed creature was echoed by the shouts of the posse in the rear, and Frank James dug his spurs into his already badly-winded animal.

"Faster, Jess! The brutes are upon us!" he shouted.

Another dash followed, and the horses gained a little, reaching the brow of the hill with the bloodhounds fifty feet behind them.

Jesse James glanced back once and caught a glimpse of the hungry creatures; the next minute he said a word to Fleetwind and sprinted ahead like a flash of lightning. This put him in advance of Jelly, but the outlaw felt fairly easy. He knew that his faithful brother stood between him and danger. If Jelly were to raise his weapon he would promptly be blown to eternity.

On they went like the wind, with the mad brutes

howling at their heels and the posse of excited men gradually gaining upon them. As they passed upon the crest of the knoll, Jesse James looked back again, and Star, who was in the lead of the posse, waived his hat and yelled at him.

"Faster, Jesse James, or you are doomed! You shall not escape us this time. Ha! Ha! The brutes know you, you robber!"

One of the fastest dogs had sprung at Frank James' horse, as he spoke, but the bandit turned promptly and put a bullet through him.

As the dog rolled over a shout of dismay went up from the posse, which deepened into a groan, as they saw what followed.

The bloodhounds were maddened by hunger, and as the blood oozed from the wound in their companion's throat, they forgot their human prey, and pounced upon the carcass. Jesse James saw the advantage, and called to his brother, and once more the winded horse was prodded to fresh endeavor.

Star dashed ahead and, taking a lariat from his saddle, lashed right and left among the group of dogs, but by the time they were off again the three outlaws were galloping across the level stretch to the bank of Mud River.

This stream was a narrow one, but deep and treacherous. Its bank was shelving and the current was full of whirlpools made by rocks, which barely showed above the surface.

"We'll lose 'em, boys! Faster!" yelled Star. "Don't let the rascals get into the river! Once over they'll be lost in the gorges yonder!"

Lent pressed ahead and sent a bullet before him, while the dogs yelped on, spitting froth from their fangs.

The detective's leaden missile was merciful, for Frank James' horse fell under him.

The poor creature was dead before his rider was fairly unseated. A shout of triumph went up from the posse, but it was cut short, as Jesse James suddenly wheeled the thoroughbred and came back, discharging his two weapons full at the posse.

It was a nervy thing to do, and it took their breath for a moment. Frank James was up behind his brother in a jiffy, and his own weapons were promptly extended over the outlaw's broad shoulders.

Their appearance was diabolical, as they shot together to kill.

They seemed like twin demons on the back of Nemesis.

Crack!

Crack!

The volley poured out was at too great a distance to be effective, but three of the posse received painful flesh wounds.

"Ha! Ha! How is that for a taste?" cried Jesse James, tauntingly.

"One!

"Two!

"Three!

"Fire!"

Star gave the order, and a dozen rifles responded.

The famous outlaw's hat brim was literally cut away, and one arm fell to his side.

Then Jim Jelly threw up both hands and reeled in his saddle.

Frank James caught both bridles and turned the horses.

A second later they were poised upon the treacherous bank of the river.

Everything was against them, and the bold bandits knew it.

Glancing back once more, Jesse James saw the nearest bloodhound leap forward, and, in a second a knife whizzed through the air and landed in the creature's shoulder.

A second later, there was a terrific splash.

The bank had caved in, and the outlaws were in the water with their horses under them.

In a second they were out of sight in the roaring stream, which had been badly swollen by recent freshets.

The posse drew up on the bank and Lent dispatched the wounded dog, kicking its carcass into the water before the others could devour it.

"Great Scott! what a grave!" said Star, as he slid from the saddle and attempted to peer down into the rushing water.

"It's ther deepest spot right hyar! They was fools ter risk it," said one of the men. "It's sixty feet or more' an' as full of holes as er hornet's nest. I'll 'low they'll never come up out er thet thar mud, strangers!"

"Snakes and crocodiles! thar they be," exclaimed one of the men, raising his face from the water.

He pointed down to where two dark objects lay upon the bottom.

"It's the horses! Jove! that's too bad! Hanged if I ain't sorry to see the last of that thoroughbred!" said Star, excitedly.

"Reckon he won't hev no more use fer ther critter," remarked Bob Slicer. "'Tain't likely he's alive if th' hoss is dead! Look thar, Peck Watson; ain't thet thar Jim Jelly?"

He pointed to another black object that he had made out in the water, and, as the angry stream rushed on, the thing rose slowly to the surface.

"Reckon yer right, Bob! Thet thar's Jim's hand," answered Peck, as a coat sleeve rose above the water.

Swish! went a coil of rope, and the noose of a lariat was hauled taut around the arm, just above the elbow.

A minute later Jim Jelly was jerked to the bank, and a couple of the men were rolling the water out of him.

"Reckon he fell under ther critter or got er knock of some kind—Jim's a fust-rate swimmer," remarked Slicer, as he worked on him.

Star had been scanning the stream and the opposite bank, but had not detected so much as a sign of the outlaw brothers.

There was not a ripple on the surface to show that they were swimming underneath.

"If the scoundrels escape this time, it will be a miracle," said Lent, solemnly. "I'll feel tempted to throw up my job and let the rascals alone. They must be like fish if they can stay five minutes under water."

"Snakes! if they kin do thet thar, they'd orter be allowed t' live," began Slicer, when Jim Jelly gave a snort that showed he was returning to consciousness.

The dogs had settled down after recognizing Jelly as a friend, but Lent and Star, with Sam Green at their heels, were examining the creek bottom at different points by putting their faces flat in the water.

Suddenly Star let out a whoop that made every man's hand drop to his weapon, and as the detective raised his dripping face from the water he pointed down the stream to a clump of bushes, whose long stems grew both up from and down into the water.

"Look there, boys! The bank is shelving; it's just the place for the rascals to hide! They must have swam like eels to gain that shelter while the ripples were on the water!"

The rest looked where he pointed, and instantly the dogs began to howl.

They seemed to understand that their prey had been scented, but that they were to be deprived of the pleasure of flushing them from cover.

"Shut up, you hellhounds!" roared Slicer, who owned the animals. "We'll scare out the woodchucks and give yer another chance at 'em! Into th' water and over t' ther other side, pards! Cussed ef we don't smother th' thieves, ef we can't get at 'em no other way!"

"Save ther carcasses, Bob; they've got er price on em," warned Peck Watson.

"Yes; save Jesse James, and alive if possible," urged Star. "No one will believe he is dead unless they see his body. On, boys! I'll lead! Here we go to victory!"

There was another splash in the water, and at that instant a pistol spoke.

It seemed to come from the clump of bushes, and a bullet cut its way across the surface of the water.

Star's horse emitted a groan, and sank beneath him.

Once more the outlaw had thwarted his enemies' designs, and for a second his pursuers were baffled.

Then Howard Lent suddenly thought of something.

Jim Jelly was breathing hard, and fast regaining his senses.

Taking the lariat from his saddle, he bound the fellow securely.

He did not mean that the rascally constable should aid Jesse James in this emergency.

CHAPTER CLXXX.

AT BAY.

Star had made a grab for the bank, and Bob Slicer pulled him up just as a second bullet came skimming over the water.

"Reckon we'll call a halt on fordin' jest yet, pardners," said Slicer, solemnly. "Ther cusses air very much erlive, I'm thinkin', an' ef we've cut our eye-teeth we'll stay on dry land a while longer."

"They're under the bank all right! There's space for 'em to breathe above the water, I reckon! Hold on, boys, till their guns are wet. Bullets don't go any too straight when the barrel's full of water."

As Star spoke he quieted the dogs, and then drew back from the bank.

He did not care for another bath in the muddy water.

The rest of the posse drew back also, and began bandaging their wounds, while they watched the suspicious spot on the opposite bank, where the outlaws were supposed to be hiding.

"We've got 'em dead ter rights! Jesse's game is up!" said Will Star, grimly. "He can't come out, and he can't stay in that hole."

Sam Green raised his pistol and snapped the trigger twice.

The bullets cut away quite a network of the vines at the point of observation.

"Thet thar's er good idea! Reckon I'd best finish th' job," said Slicer, banging away at the vines.

The next minute the clump of bushes was riddled and the whole posse gave vent to a cry of astonishment.

Under that particular spot the water had hollowed the bank out considerably, the bushes growing upon a shelf of soil which could hardly afford them sustenance.

When the network of vines was cleared away it showed the cave underneath, with the water swishing and surging into it like a seething caldron.

Lent drew a long breath as he took in the situation.

It was a strain on his nerves to see a man die in such a place, even though such a death might be altogether too good for him.

"It's the end of our search, boys," spoke up Star, again. "Mr. Pinkerton will have the honor of being in at the death, and it will be a feather in his cap that will make Scotland Yard green with envy!"

"Reckon yer'd best not count chickens till they're hatched," said Slicer, grimly. "I 'low things look bad fer Jess, but ther cuss has been in tight places afore! Who knows how fur back thet thar washout goes, pardners? Ther scamp may be burrowin' like er gopher clean ercross ther stretch yonder!"

He pointed to the opposite hills as he spoke, and instantly Star grew uneasy.

"I can't get any wetter; s'pose I try it again?" he said, moving toward the bank. "If the scoundrel is alive he'll never let me cross! He knows I'd have the bank down on his head if I ever got over there!"

"I'll do it this time. You've had your share, old man," spoke up Lent, promptly.

"Nonsense! I'm going! Good-by!"

The brave fellow plunged into the water as he

spoke, and in a second their came the crack of a revolver.

"Haw! haw! Jess is on his last gasp. Thet thar shootin' won't kill no one!" roared Slicer, after a breathless second.

"Reckon th' water is confusion', an' I 'low thar ain't much chance ter aim," remarked one of the others, as he traced the bullet's course across the water.

Lent held his breath and watched his friend struggling in the water.

When he was half-way across, the current was too strong for him, and he was forced to come back and join his companions.

"There's nothing to do but wait," said Lent, decidedly, as he dragged him to the bank. "The wretch has got to give in or die like a rat in a hole. I move we camp out, right here. I'll never leave the place till I've flushed my quarry."

The motion was accepted, and the hours dragged by without a sign of the outlaw brothers being seen by one of them.

Darkness fell, but they lighted the river by building bonfires.

The cave under the bank showed as clearly as in the daylight.

"Reckon now they was layin' ter rob ther express box ter-night, warn't they, Slicer?" spoke up Peck Watson, after a long silence.

"That's the lay," answered Star, and Slicer broke out laughing.

"Haw! haw! It would take more'n Jesse James t' find thet box," he said, proudly. "I reckon Wells, Fargo & Company knows who they kin trust! Thet box is hid, an'——"

"Sh! Hold on er minit, Slicer," warned Peck Watson, softly. "'Twon't do t' make such an infernal racket."

Silence followed this remark, and then one-half of the men stretched themselves beside their horses, while the balance patrolled the bank and kept the bonfire blazing.

CHAPTER CLXXXI.

THE ESCAPE.

Suddenly Star put his ear to the ground and listened intently.

Away in the distance he could hear the clatter of hoofs, and a moment later a group of horsemen were outlined on the crest of the knoll above them.

"Muzzle the dogs and hide the horses!" he ordered, in a low voice. "It may be friends and it may be enemies. This isn't the time to be taking chances."

"Thar's no one left in Snake City t' come!" muttered Slicer. "Them that's left air 'tendin' jail an' lookin' arter th' wimmin."

He caught his pets by the collar and slipped straps over their noses as he spoke, then dragged them by main strength into a clump of bushes.

A minute later there was but one man on the river bank.

The others had flattened themselves upon the ground some distance away, and were doing their best to keep the horses quiet.

The solitary watcher upon the bank was Will Star, who had not forgotten his quarry for a second.

In spite of the new danger he kept his eyes upon the opposite bank, and not a ripple or eddy in the water escaped him.

The horsemen were advancing cautiously and were soon down the slope, but not a word was spoken among them that could be heard by the detective, and every now and then there would be a halt for the space of a minute.

As Star crouched beside a low bush he could see the water churning at the entrance to the cave under the bank, and the realization that Jesse James was dead grew upon him steadily.

"The riders yonder can go hang! I'll watch that rathole," he muttered, between his teeth. "They're coming, I guess, to investigate our bonfire."

He flattened himself out upon the ground and waited breathlessly, with one finger pressed firmly upon the trigger of his weapon.

It was a dangerous position, but the brave fellow never faltered.

With the death of Jesse James so near he seemed oblivious to everything.

Tracking the famous outlaw to his death would recompense him for every ill he had endured, and every pain he had suffered.

His body was half hidden by the bushes, yet he did not expect to remain unobserved very long, especially if the newcomers were enemies.

An exclamation from the foremost rider in the group relieved his suspense, but it made the chills creep down his spine in spite of his bravery.

It was the fellow who had robbed the Lone Trail

stage and dropped the letter which Mrs. James had written to her outcast husband.

"Ho, thar!" began the fellow; "what's the meaning of this, pardner?"

"Better keep yer finger on th' trigger, Bill; thar's no knowin' who it mout be," said one of his companions. "Ther cusses thet's arter Jess may hev had their supper hyar! I 'low thar's somebody hereabouts by ther looks of thet bonfire."

"Thar's some one hyar, Bill. The ground is all tracked up," said another voice, and Star heard Jim Jelly, who was near him, give a grunt of astonishment.

"Reckon we'd better be gittin' on, Bill Price," went on the same voice. "We can't cross hyar, ther current's too strong."

"Shut your mouth, Wilcox! Those were Jesse James' tracks, and he's the man I'm after," retorted the first speaker. "If Jess crossed here, I reckon we can do it."

"Yer can't do it, Bill," spoke up another voice, decidedly, and this time both detectives recognized the voice of Coyote Jim, whom they had last seen in jail at Snake City.

In a second it flashed through their minds exactly what had happened.

Bill Price, the famous outlaw, was also in the deal, and he had carried out Jesse James' orders and freed the jailbirds.

Star raised his head an inch and turned his eyes from the cave for the space of a minute.

That was long enough to show him that Price was carrying a strong box in front of him on the saddle.

"The express box!" he exclaimed, in a subdued voice.

"Search the bushes, boys! I can't go on till I know what's being done here," roared Bill Price, suddenly. "There's enough of us to fight if we have to, I reckon. I'm of the opinion the hounds have gone on, tho', and we're only losing time. There's probably a sleuth left behind to keep the fire a-burnin'."

"Thet's it, Bill! It's a signal. We'd best be movin'," urged Coyote Bill. "Ef Jess was hyar, he's gone by now. Th' posse got on his tracks, and cut him off from comin' t' time this evenin'. 'Tain't often th' cap'n is balked."

A loud laugh followed, and the group turned their horses.

They had not made an attempt to search the bushes.

Star was undecided how to act, but he was not left in uncertainty long.

There was a fiendish howl from the throats of the bloodhounds, and Bob Slicer urged them on in a furious whisper.

Instantly a yell from Bill Price was followed by the snap of pistols, while the horse bearing Coyote Jim reared and plunged into the river.

Howard Lent was on his feet in a second, and in his saddle.

"Quick! after 'em, boys! They're a part of the James gang!" he yelled.

Will Star dropped to one knee and raised his weapon, fixing his hawklike gaze on the opposite bank of the river.

Flash!

Crack!

Bang!

The outlaws fired upon the dogs as the huge beasts leaped after them.

Then there was another volley and four of the escaping bandits reeled in their saddles.

Between the dogs and the posse they were taken at a disadvantage.

Bill Price spurred ahead, but Bob Slicer had seen him, and, in a second, the express agent was after him red hot, to recover his treasure.

The scrimmage that followed was almost one-sided, and, as the weapons cracked and the men were yelling like Indians, Star caught a glimpse of a dark body for a second in the water.

Snap! went the trigger, but the light flickered at that second.

He strained his eyes for another glimpse of the object, and for just an instant he was beside himself with excitement.

The thought had flashed into his mind that he was to win the victory, that his was to be the bullet to end the career of the famous bandit.

He had another glimpse of the dark object, and the trigger fell again.

At that second the wind shifted slightly and blew the flames in a different direction.

The mouth of the washout in the bank was shrouded in darkness.

Lent called to him after that, and a moment later he joined him.

The outlaw gang had been badly winged and relieved of its weapons, with the exception of Bill Price and Buck Bolton, who had dashed up the slope with Bob Slicer and Sam Green not twenty paces behind them.

Star groaned in agony as Lent replenished the fire, and then helped Peck Watson to bind the wrists and ankles of their prisoners.

It was a busy night for the detectives, for two of their men were injured and two more went back to Snake City for assistance.

At daybreak an astonishing discovery was made.

The river had fallen sufficiently to show a yawning hole under the bank, and, taking his pistol between his teeth, Star made his third plunge into the water.

There was a strong current, which drifted him down to the washout; then the eddy spun him around, and finally sucked him in.

It was done so easily that the detective gasped in pure astonishment.

Inside the cave the water was as calm as a basin, and Star found himself in a pool several feet in diameter, and reasonably shallow.

Nearly a foot above him was the crust of the bank.

It was a spot well calculated for shelter and protection if one only knew the way to enter it safely.

To his intense disgust, he found no one there but himself.

The James boys had escaped from the place under the very noses of their captors.

CHAPTER CLXXXII.

A SHORT JOB.

When assistance came from Snake City they had bad news to report.

The jail had been burned down and seven of the natives murdered.

There was a panic in the settlement, and for once every man was sober.

Nothing had been seen of Bob Slicer and Green, or the men they were after, and some one had already apprised the express company of the robbery.

Star and Lent accompanied the rest back to the inn at Snake City, only to find that they must stay there, if they expected to save their prisoners.

Three days later one of the shanties held the outlaws who had been captured, and the sheriff from the next county was there to take charge of them.

Nick Boozer came to the front and did wonders in the way of restoring calm, and by the time the detectives were ready to leave, things were in a fairly normal condition.

The cowboys who had been injured in the first scrimmage were well enough to go home, so the two detectives set out alone on the journey to Sacramento City.

Bat Lynn was bound on the same journey, but in his eagerness to join Miss Barton he took the train the day before.

The three were to meet in Sacramento, and once more start on a still hunt for the outlaw.

Twenty-four hours from Sacramento City the express train was held up, and as Star was jerked out of his berth he found himself looking down the barrel of Buck Bolton's revolver.

There was a flash and a crack, and the weapon dropped to the floor.

The next second the robber was engaged in a furious tussle with the car conductor.

Star dashed out upon the platform, followed by Lent, and was held up by a porter, who took them for cutthroats.

"Hold on, there, you black rascal! Give me that pop!" yelled Star, as he hit the fellow an uppercut.

Lent grabbed the weapon and dashed back into the car, while Star tried to explain the situation to the negro.

Men were piling out of the car, and women were shrieking when Star finally reached the ground and sized up the situation.

Two masked men were standing by the engine with their pistols leveled at the cab, and Star made a dash back for his revolvers the moment he saw them.

"Who be they, pardner?" asked a voice in his ear, and turning he came face to face with Bat Lynn, who had been obliged to stop over.

"It's the James boys, curse them!" growled Star, as he tried to get back into the car. "Hello, old man! Have you got anybody?"

The question was asked as Lent appeared upon the platform, holding onto his head and minus his weapon.

"Now, gentlemen, you can get back into your seats and the train will go on," called out one of the men at the engine.

A second later, the same individual blew a long, shrill whistle.

Instantly four men wearing masks dropped from the train and forced their way through the various groups of shivering passengers by flourishing revolvers under their noses.

Star was suddenly caught by the shoulder and swung around as if he was on a pivot, to find himself looking into a steel barrel.

"Hang me, ef it ain't th' sleuthhound! Reckon Jess don't know yer aboard, or yer wouldn't got off so easy," growled a familiar voice.

"And if I had my weapon you wouldn't get off so easy, Buck Bolton!" roared Star, furiously.

"We're all in the same box, Star," said Lent, in a grim voice. "The curs were on the train and they've stolen most of the revolvers! We're lucky to get off with whole skins, to my way of thinking."

"You're right there, young man," said one of the shivering passengers; then, as the engine snorted, there was a rush for the platforms.

"Ha! ha! Sorry to have delayed you, engineer, but I reckon you can make it up," roared Jesse James, as he stepped from the track, without lowering his weapon or turning his back for an instant.

"All aboard! The danger is over, gentlemen," called out the train conductor, solemnly.

"Keep away from the windows, Star. Jess couldn't resist the temptation of plugging you if he saw you," warned Lent, as the train moved slowly.

The detectives drew back, but Bat Lynn leaned forward.

"It's Frank and Jess, and they've got ther safe, by thunder!" he gasped, excitedly.

"Where the deuce are Slicer and Sam Green?" asked Star, a minute later, when the train was thundering on with increased velocity.

"Exactly what I want to know," was his companion's answer.

The balance of the run to Sacramento City was made among lamentations.

Not a passenger on board had escaped unscathed. They were all bemoaning the loss of weapons, jewels and money.

Besides these personal effects, Jesse had made a rich haul.

The small safe that he had confiscated contained nearly a hundred thousand dollars.

The day after their arrival the detectives danced at

Bat's wedding, but the occasion was darkened by the thought of Green and Slicer.

That night when these two men bobbed up in the office of the hotel, there was a wedding reception which would never be forgotten.

The story which the men had to tell was as follows:

They had exhausted their ammunition and so had the outlaws, and the race was run for several hours without a shot being exchanged between them.

Then Slicer's horse tripped and fell, and Green stopped to render him assistance.

When they were ready to go on they found themselves near the line of the railroad, and the rascals they were after had been lost sight of. They had in reality escaped on a slowly-passing freight.

An hour later a freight train passed, and Green turned his horse loose and boarded it.

The freighter arrived at Sacramento City only the day before the express, and, as they had been sidetracked several times, they were bone sore and dirty.

Twenty-four hours were given to recuperating and watching the lists of incoming passengers, and now the two were ready to join the detectives once more and renew their search for Jesse James.

Bat Lynn promised to join them when the honeymoon was over, but the detectives did not anticipate his speedy return to their company.

Where Jesse James had disappeared to, the detectives did not know.

Their first efforts in the city was to locate the robber.

This was easily done by tracing his wife, who was living under an assumed name in the extreme suburbs of the city.

Their success in tracking the famous bandit through the far West is well known.

Though they were many times close upon his trail, it seemed impossible to capture him.

One of the closest calls of his life was soon to come, however, which will be told in next week's number.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Send in your exchange notices, boys. We will publish them all in a special "Exchange Department."

ABOUT FAMOUS MEN.

Boys, turn to page 31 and see the announcement of the new Contest.

It's going to be a rattler, like the one that has just closed.

Everybody is to have another try at the valuable prizes offered. Don't miss this opportunity, but send in your article at once.

Following are some of the best articles received during the week.

Read them, and then send in your own!

Lincoln's Greatness.

(By Orville Dunlap, Ellsworth, Ill.)

Abraham Lincoln is the undaunted hero who has won my sincere admiration. He was a tall, muscular man, with mammoth proportions, and a braver man never trod upon the face of mother earth.

He went through many hardships and suffered much for his loved country. Through his early days he would work hard all day long and at night would lay down on the floor by the fireside and study. One feature I greatly admire about him was his determined ways and unchanged will. He began at the very bottom of life's ladder and went right straight through without stopping for anything till he reached the very top. He was a fearless, upright, noble, intelligent and honest citizen and loved by all his fellow countrymen. He was a prominent figure in the Black Hawk war, and after that he did many brave deeds for his country.

In 1861 he was inaugurated President of the United States. It was at this time when the country was in need of a President like Lincoln. No one could have filled the office better than he did. It was at the time of the Civil War, the great struggle between the North and South. Lincoln did more to set the slaves free than any other man. The country was in great distress, but Lincoln did not once neglect his duty. He was re-elected in 1864 and March 4, 1865, was again sworn into office. A month and ten days later he was murdered while at a theatre in Washington by John Wilkes Booth. By this treacherous act the Confederacy was doomed. The country had lost a man that could never be replaced. Why did the people rise up in indignation upon hearing of his murder? Why did they mourn his death? Why did they show such irrevocable and tender feelings towards him? Because the great man had reached the heart of every patriotic citizen by his kindly and noble manners all through his notable career.

Noah Webster and Webster's Dictionary.

(By Oscar Hinton, Meridian, Miss.)

Noah Webster, the American writer and philologist, was born in Hartford, Conn., October 16, 1758. His early life was spent upon a farm. He entered Yale College in 1774, but the war of the Revolution broke out, and he spent a year in his father's company of patriot militia. The boy graduated from Yale in 1778, in the same class with many afterward distinguished men. He became a school teacher, giving his spare time to the study of law. In 1781 he was admitted to the bar, but

as he had a good deal of difficulty in building up a practice he returned to teaching.

While an instructor at Goshen, N. Y., he published a number of schoolbooks. One of these, his famous speller, was so successful that it supported Mr. Webster and his family while he was at work on his dictionary.

In 1788 Mr. Webster established a magazine in New York, and on its failure settled in Hartford, Conn. There he married, and four years later removed to New York again to try editorial work. In 1798 he went to New Haven, and in 1812 removed to Amherst, Mass., where he became one of the founders of Amherst College. In 1822 he resumed his residence at New Haven, where he died May 28, 1843.

A Michigan Boy On General Grant.

(By Grover Carvin, Cadillac, Mich.)

Ulysses S. Grant was born April 27, 1822, at Point Pleasant, Ohio. His father was of Scotch descent. At the age of seventeen he entered the military academy at West Point where he graduated four years later. He was commissioned brevet second lieutenant, assigned to the fourth infantry and remained in the army eleven years. He was in every battle of the Mexican War except Buena Vista. In 1854, having reached the grade of captain, he resigned his commission in the army. When the Civil War broke out in 1861 he offered his services to the Governor of Illinois, and was appointed colonel of the twenty-first Illinois regiment. The seventh of August he was commissioned a brigadier-general. His first exploit was the breaking of a Confederate camp, at Belmont, Missouri, after a hard fight.

On the 16th of February, 1862, he compelled the surrender of Fort Donelson, securing 15,000 prisoners, 65 cannon and 17,600 stand of small arms. This was the most important Union victory. Grant was then made major-general of volunteers and placed in command of the district of West Tennessee. On the 6th of April his army of 38,000, while camping near Shiloh awaiting reinforcements under General Buel was attacked by 50,000 Confederates, who wanted to overwhelm him before Buel arrived. A terrible battle lasted all day and the national troops were driven back some. At dark Buel's forces arrived and the next day the Confederates retreated.

Grant's campaign against Vicksburg and its capture was the most daring on record. He was now made major-general in the regular army and was given command of the armies of the West.

On the 23d, 24th, 25th of November, 1863, he fought the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, which was the last of the hostile forces of the West.

In February, 1864, he was made lieutenant-general by Congress. From 1864 till 1865 he fought the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna and Cold Harbor. At length Grant broke through the Confederates' lines, captured Richmond, pursued Lee and received his surrender of his army at Appomattox on the 9th of April, 1865.

The assassination of Lincoln followed, and Grant was left the most prominent man of the nation. Congress created him general, and he was showered with the honors of the nation. In 1868 he was chosen President of the United States, and in 1872 was re-elected.

The honor of twice being chosen President of the United States gained for him a reputation all over the world. Whatever may be thought of Grant's career, he will always stand in history among the greatest generals of the world.

The Builder of the First Steamboat.

(By William M. Carter, Brooklyn, N. Y.)

In looking at the back of JESSE JAMES WEEKLY I see that a great many boys are writing stories of famous Americans in the Character Prize Contest, so I thought I would write one also. I have chosen for my hero, Robert Fulton.

Robert Fulton was born at Little Britain, Pennsylvania; his parents came from Ireland to America, and as they were in very poor circumstances all the knowledge that young Fulton acquired was to be able to read and write good. He made good use, however, of his knowledge, and passed the time allowed him for recreation in studying.

When he was twenty-two years of age he went to London and began to study painting under West; but after he had stayed there for a number of years he found out that painting was not his true vocation, and accordingly abandoned it and applied himself wholly to mechanics. Some of the wonderful works he performed in Devonshire obtained him the patronage of the Duke of Bridgewater.

Receiving an invitation from the United States Minister at Paris, he went to that city in the year of 1796 and remained there for six or seven years, always thinking of new projects and inventions. Among his inventions there was the Nautilus or submarine boat for use in naval warfare, which he tried to get the French government to accept, but could not; nor was he any more successful with the British government. Having failed in this, he turned his attention to a subject that had frequently occupied his mind before, and on which he had written a treatise in the year of 1793, viz., the application of steam to navigation. He then constructed a small steamboat in the year of 1803, and his experiments with it on the Seine were very successful, but being disgusted with the reception given him, he returned to New York in the year 1806 and continued to pursue his experiments there.

He afterwards got his torpedo boat in such a state of perfection that it was used most effectively in the war between Great Britain and the United States of America.

He launched this steam vessel upon the Hudson in 1807 and made a successful start in the presence of thousands of amazed spectators.

There is just a little more to say, and that is that from this period, 1807, steamers for the construction of which Fulton received the patent from the Legislature, came into general use upon the waters of the United States. Robert Fulton died in 1815, which death produced extraordinary demonstrations throughout the United States.

I forgot to say that he had married a niece of Robert Livingstone, the United States Minister to France.

An Indian Fighter.

(By Joseph Marrinich, No. Cambridge, Mass.)

I have read all your Jesse James stories from No. 1, and have noticed your prize contest.

I want to write about General Robert E. Lee. He was a grandson of General H. Lee, a famous revolutionary man. His father, Sidney S. Lee, was an officer of the United States Navy. General F. Lee was appointed to the military academy of West Point at sixteen. He was one of the best horsemen in the United States. He was happy when danger threatened him, and he faced it with a laugh. At one time he had a hand-to-hand fight with a famous Comanche chief. He weighed at that time 40 pounds, while the Indian weighed at least thirty pounds more.

He sprang toward the chief as he drew his revolver. The chief grasped his pistol hand and raised his scalping knife. Lee grasped his wrist with his other hand. There was no one at hand to interfere. Lee realized that the other was the stronger. Suddenly releasing the chief's hand, he struck straight from the shoulder, knocking the redskin backwards. The Indian staggered backward, but quickly recovered. Springing at Lee he grasped him and gave him the back wheel. It ended the Indian.

Once in a battle an Indian arrow pierced his side. He went on fighting for a while, but the wound began to bother him. He told a man near him to pull it out. The man tried, but failed.

"Put your foot against my body," Lee said. His face became pale but no cry escaped him. It was plain to see he was in agony. Many a day he suffered, but he finally got well.

Nathan Hale.

(By T. Grover Keith, Gravett, Ark.)

Like a star shining amidst the appalling gloom that so thickly pervaded our country in 1775, the life of Nathan Hale stands as a glorious example.

With something of romance combined with his grand, heroic disposition, I must consider him as my ideal. I dedicate this to the memory of him who died the death of a martyr. Nothing was ever so gravely pathetic as his sad and untimely death. After graduating with high honors from Yale he settled down as a teacher, but when the war broke out he was with the troops that hastened to Boston. Fighting under the command of Wash-

ington for a year, he was appointed captain of the Washington bodyguards.

One foggy morning while the Americans occupied Harlem Heights, Washington requested the service of a spy to go to the camp of the redcoats. With his valiant and ever-ready spirit, Nathan Hale quickly responded and was accepted. With the skill of a daring spy, he made an entire sketch of the important plans of the British. His work finished, he set about to return, but on the suspicion of a negro he was searched and his papers found. After being severely bound and gagged, he was confined in a grave vault of Henry Beekman over night. Then in the morning he was sentenced to be hanged as a spy by the heartless court-martial. Knowing that on the morrow he would be hanged, he wrote a loving and courageous letter to his mother, but it was heartlessly destroyed. Even when Hale requested a clergyman, he received a brutal cuff on the ear from the hand of the officer.

On the morrow, as he stood before his executioners, a peaceful smile illuminated his pale face and tears glistened in his bright blue eyes, as he spoke the words we so well remember.

"I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country."

Then as the rope tightened about his neck, the calmness of death paled his glorious features, and his soul had passed to its rewarding God.

The First Commander of the United States Navy.

(By Joseph Steinberg, Albany, N. Y.)

The American navy really dates its birth back to a short while after the battle of Bunker Hill, when the Continental Congress ordered the building of thirteen ships of war.

Almost all of these small vessels were captured or burned to avoid capture before the war was over—not, however, before they had done good service for their side.

Abraham Whipple, a Rhode Islander, who had successfully captained the privateer Gamecock in the French war, and now owned a ship of his own, was recognized as commodore. He was a man of action, of few words,

but of convincing bearing, and his is the first figure to stand out prominently in American naval warfare. He it was who organized on the spur of the moment the band of untrained volunteers that poured over the sides and decks of the British Gasper, stranded in Narragansett Bay, and burned her, after capturing her crew. His hand fired the first gun of the Revolution over the water in the taking of a tender of the Rose. He captained the Columbus and later the Providence, which took more British prizes than any other American vessel. His last act of importance was bringing to Boston eight of the enemy's ships, worth a million dollars. Shortly afterward he was taken prisoner and held until the war was over, when he finally settled in Ohio, claiming no reward, but rejoicing that the prime of his life had been spent in successfully defending the principles in which he believed. Such was the first commander of the American navy—a sturdy figure to look back on, a man with a clean, glorious record of accomplishment.

General Benjamin F. Butler.

(By Arthur R. Jones, Quenemo, Kan.)

Benjamin F. Butler was born November 5, at the village of Deerfield, New Hampshire. His career in after years proved him, in my estimation, the greatest of men. His reasoning was perfect. His judgment was without fault, and his grasp of affairs complete.

While being of a different political school, no man at that time had more of the confidence of President Lincoln than he. While only a civilian and the graduate of no military school, he was entrusted by the President with hazardous undertakings, commanding large bodies of men with credit to himself and country.

While being roundly abused for his famous "woman's" order at New Orleans, it was the best thing that could have been done under the circumstances.

He had a very firm mouth and square chin. I think the best thing he ever did was to leave the Charleston convention with the declaration that he would go home to Massachusetts and raise troops to suppress the Rebellion, which he knew was unavoidable.

And he did.

A FOWL HUNT.

As the long-legged Shanghais that I bought last spring have steadily declined to lay, Mrs. Nuff the other morning requested me to step out into the back yard and kill one of them for dinner.

She said she expected company to dine with us, and there was a large-sized void in the bill of fare which one of those imported Shanghais could just about fill.

The proposition rather startled me at first.

I had never thought seriously before of killing a chicken in my life.

Whatever poultry we had needed for home consump-

tion hitherto I had purchased slaughtered ready for cooking purposes.

It didn't look exactly right to swoop down on a defenseless spring chicken only thirty or forty years old, and remorselessly massacre it in its budding chickenhood, as it were.

Besides, I didn't know precisely how to go to work at it, so I told Seraphenia perhaps it would be just as well to engage a regularly ordained butcher to perform the job.

But she said there was no particular necessity of hir-

ing a man for the purpose; if I hadn't the requisite muscle and nerve to twist the neck of a poor, weak chicken, she would go out and try it herself.

That settled the matter.

I knew if my wife went forth to slay that chicken I would probably have a big doctor's bill to pay, for Seraphenia is impulsive to the verge of rashness sometimes, and when she throws her whole soul into an undertaking she is generally pretty apt to overdo the matter and get laid up for a month or two; so I decided to attend to the chicken massacre personally.

I arrayed myself in a linen duster and a hatchet and sauntered out into the back yard.

Those Shanghais had got through their morning's work tearing up the landscape, and were standing about apparently asleep—but it was only apparently.

In reality, they were pretty wide awake, and they seemed to intuitively divine my murderous intention.

Anyway, I found them all on their guard, and whenever I approached one of them the wary fowl would promptly adjourn over into the next yard, and then turn round and blink solemnly at me as much as to say, "Oh, no, you don't."

This naturally made it extremely sad for me; but I did not get discouraged as some would, and give up the chase in disgust.

On the contrary, I expectorated on my hands, grasped the hatchet with a never-let-go-till-death grip, and sailed in harder than ever, and the way I galloped round the yard and over the fences in the wake of those doomed chickens was a caution to gymnasts.

I finally got one of the Shanghais cornered and was about to smite it to the earth with the hatchet, when the chicken suddenly dodged through between my legs, and struck a bee-line for the Cheviot Hills, at least, it was traveling in that direction when it passed out of sight.

Up to the present date that chicken has not returned to its former haunts. It either went so far it forgot the way back, or it made up its mind that I was a dangerous character to live with and decided to stay away on that account.

I next went in pursuit of a long-legged Jersey Shanghai that had recovered from its first spasm of surprise and was then peacefully grazing on the young cabbage plants in the garden.

Cautiously approaching the grazing fowl, I hurled the hatchet with all my might at its head, but the chicken abruptly stepped to one side, about fifteen feet, and looked at me in a reproachful sort of way, while the tomahawk went hurtling by and chopped a choice grapevine in two as slick as a whistle, and finally bounded off into a hedge which belonged to our next-door neighbor.

The hatchet was gone, and before I could hunt up another weapon the hen I was in pursuit of had the presence of mind to plunge through an opening in the fence and scoot.

She has failed to come back, and I presume she has engaged board somewhere else. I am afraid she has lost her confidence in me.

I eventually got hold of a clothes prop about thirteen feet long, and began prospecting again for chickens, while Seraphenia stood calmly in the doorway and cheered me on.

"There's a nice plump one up on the grape arbor, Noah. Hit it quick before it flies away!" exclaimed she, pointing to one of our Jersey shanghais, which had taken refuge in that exalted position.

"Oh, don't you worry, Mrs. Nuff. I reckon I am able to attend to this chicken massacre!" I sarcastically rejoined, and then I carefully approached the grape arbor, and whirling the prop over my head with both hands, I brought it down with a force that lifted me right off my feet and bursted off both of my rear brace buttons.

Then I laid aside the pole and began looking about for the mangled remains of that pullet.

"Where did it go to?" queried Mrs. Nuff, as she noted my look of blank amazement at not finding any dead poultry where I expected to.

"Guess I must have drove the carcass into the ground. If you had kept still I wouldn't have hit so hard," I retorted, as I again picked up the clothes prop and prepared for another sortie.

"Yes, and I reckon the hen flew over the house and you didn't hit it at all! It is in the front garden now eating the gravel out of the flower beds!" triumphantly exclaimed Seraphenia.

"It is, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll make short work of it, then," I shouted, and rushed through the house, trailing the prop after me like a comet out for recess.

I reached the front garden and then I "reached" for that pullet.

I was getting excited now, and I struck out wildly.

The first blow knocked three panes of glass out of the bay window, the second mowed down a couple of choice dahlias my wife was bringing up by hand, and the third — Well, the third capped the climax; or, rather, uncapped the minister.

He happened to come along just then, and as our front garden is rather abbreviated, that erratic prop swung out over the palings, and sent his shining beaver flying through the air.

I hastily tucked the prop under my arm, and turned round to apologize, and at the end of it struck a sour-visaged old maid (who chanced to be passing) in the mouth, and sent her false teeth spinning half-way across the street.

Then I backed up and flurriedly swung that awkward prop round on our own premises just in time to take Seraphenia under the chin, as she appeared on the scene, and knock her sprawling under the flower bed, and then I dropped the prop and rushed into the house, and went down in the cellar to cool off and reflect a few, leaving the minister and the ancient spinster and Mrs. Nuff to condole with each other.

And in a few moments, when the expected company arrived, the fragrant aroma of codfish could be plainly discerned with the naked olfactory as it gently simmered through the atmosphere.

They had some for dinner, I believe. I didn't go up to see.

All Aboard for the New Contest!



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Chose anybody you please—Washington or Lincoln, Paul Revere, or General Grant, "Bob" Evans or Admiral Sampson, or anybody else you want to write about. Then sit down and write an article about him. Tell all about him, the brave deeds he did, or the famous words he uttered, etc.

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No contribution must be longer than 500 words.

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